

“Questions Every Christian Should Ask Themselves,” Part 1 - 1 Corinthians 8:1-3 – April 12th, 2015

- Today's teaching will be part one of a new series I've titled, "Questions Every Christian Should Ask Themselves."
- By way of an introduction, it's important to note the Apostle Paul is still answering questions the Corinthians wrote him about.
- In chapter seven, the questions were about being married, divorced, widowed or single, and now they're about their freedoms.
- More specifically, their freedom in Christ concerning food that was sacrificed to idols, as was practiced in that culture in Corinth.
- The meat from the sacrificed animals to their pagan gods was divided into three portions, one of which was as a burnt offering.
- The second portion was given to the priests, and the third portion was sold to the public at the local Costco there in Corinth.
- It's for this reason the Corinthians are writing Paul and asking him what they should do because this meat was a lot cheaper.
- In other words, they knew that the meat was offered to idols, but because of the price, they weren't sure if they should buy it.
- It seems that there were some Christians who had no problem barbecuing these steaks while other Christians saw it as a sin.
- Now I am keenly aware how that at this point you may be wondering what in the world meat offered to idols has to do with me.
- While this may not directly have to do with us in our day, this has numerous applications personally to our Christian lives today.
- Kindly allow me to provide you with some examples, and in so doing, I hope to address the issue of Christians having liberties.
- First let me rewind the clock back in time in order for you to have a better idea of the modern day issues today in the year 2015.
- It wasn't that long ago that Christians would never go to church without wearing a suit and tie as men, and dresses as women.
- Also, it wasn't that long ago that Christian women were never to wear makeup such that it was seen as being worldly outwardly.
- The problem with this is that nowhere in the Bible does it command the Christian to always wear suits and dresses to church.
- Furthermore, the Word of God nowhere forbids women to wear makeup because it's a sin. One has said to not would be a sin.
- The point is doing this was just like some of these Corinthian Christians who also saw the eating of meat offered to idols as sin.
- Let's fast forward to today and by way of example consider the touchy topic of Christians having the liberty to drink some wine.
- There are those who believe that Christians should never do it, and there are those who believe that Christians have the liberty.
- Because we've addressed this issue previously, let me simply say that drinking wine is not a sin, but getting or being a drunk is.
- Be that as it may, the question isn't necessarily what's okay and what's not okay rather; the question is one of loving another.
- Let me explain, if as the stronger Christian, I know my liberty will stumble the weaker Christian, am I loving enough to not do it.
- By the way, the stronger Christian is not synonymous with the stricter Christian, the stronger Christian is the one free in Christ.
- Be that as it may, we still have a problem that needs to be resolved, namely, that of what should we do when this issue arises.
- Thankfully, the chapter before us here in God's Word gives us the answer as it relates to our response concerning our liberties.
- As such, the answer comes by way of certain questions every Christian should ask themselves about our freedom as believers.

1. Am I tearing down or building up?

- v1 Paul answers their question concerning things offered to idols saying we all have knowledge that puffs up, but love edifies.
- v2 Paul then goes on to say that if anyone thinks he knows anything, as a know-it-all he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.
- v3 He again contrasts knowledge and love as he did in verse one by saying that if anyone loves God, this one is known by God.
- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is that Paul doesn't directly answer their specific question.
- Instead he compares knowledge that puffs up to love that builds up. This begs the question of why Paul would answer this way.
- It's my belief that he answers this way to provide us a litmus test by which to know whether or not we are doing what is loving.
- If we are full of ourselves and full of pride, we will be puffed up as a result and in so doing know that we are not being loving.
- Conversely, if instead of being puffed up with pride, which comes packaged with legalism, we'll be full of love and build up.
- I find it interesting that Paul would draw this comparison between the two, one of which is full of sin, and the other full of love.

I really like how one commentator said it, "The difference between puffs up and edifies is striking; it is the difference between a bubble and a building. Some Christians grow, others just swell!"

- Here's the bottom line, if I truly love I'll truly edify when it comes to my weaker brother who doesn't have the same liberty as I.
- Let me hasten to say there's nothing wrong with the brother who abstains from that which would be seen as a liberty by some.
- Rather, it is wrong when that brother seeks to impose his beliefs on another, and in so doing, sees them as the ones who sin.

In closing I would like to share a true story that happened to me when I was a new Christian back in the early 80's. After a midweek Bible study, I was part of a group of single Christians that would go out to fellowship at a local restaurant. On one particular night, a new guy showed up and began to present himself as being this super mature Christian. He told us he would never watch TV, he would never go to movies, he would never drink smoke or chew or go out with girls who do. After going on about how strong and strict of a Christian he was, you could see everyone begin to wither and shrink seeing themselves as weak no good Christian losers. As he continued puffing himself up and tearing all of us down, even I could see that he was full of spiritual pride. However, rather than challenging him, which would have been an exercise in futility, I chose instead to build up those whom he had torn down. Here's the lesson I'm learning, I know I've heard the truth when I've been built up and set free, and I know I've heard not the truth when I've been brought down under the crushing pride of the law with all of its legalism.